





# LIVESTOCK GRAZING APPENDIX

## INTRODUCTION

This appendix contains in-depth information for livestock grazing and management in the planning area. Information includes:

- allotment categories,
- screening criteria for allotments,
- base property criteria, and
- reserve common allotments (RCAs).

## ALLOTMENT CATEGORIES

The existing selective management categories (Improve or I, Maintain or M, and Custodial or C) are the foundation for designating allotment categories. The selective management category process was initiated in 1982 and was used primarily to establish priorities for improving management and investing in range improvements. Criteria for the original designations can be found in Handbook 1740-1, Appendix 1, pages 3 and 4.

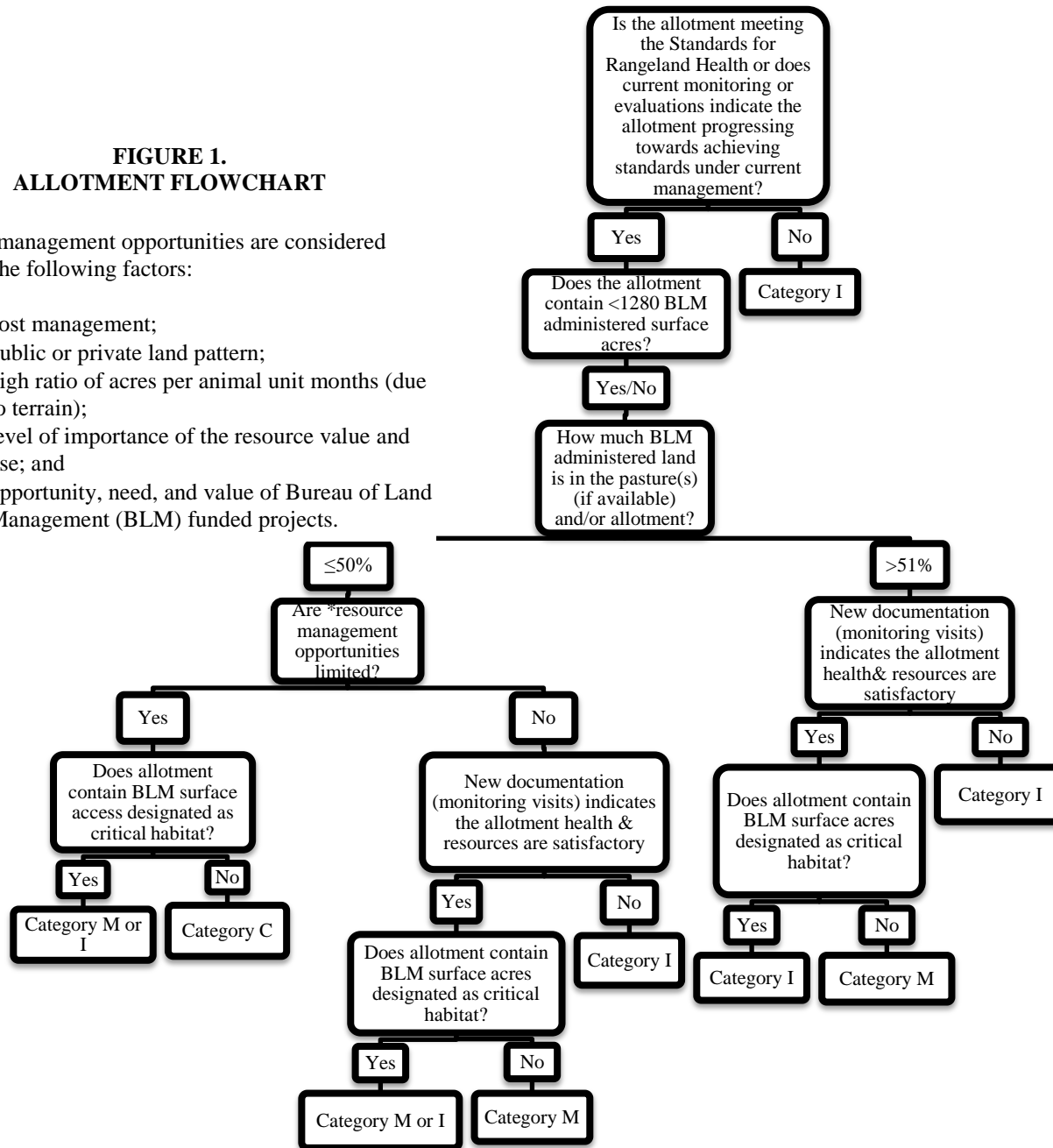
Below are the criteria in addition to those found in Handbook 1740-1 that are to be used to designate allotments as Category I, M, or C. Allotments are categorized as appropriate and recorded in the Rangeland Administration System. Allotments may be re-categorized as new information from monitoring, land health evaluations, habitat assessments, sensitive species data, or other information becomes available. Assigning allotments to one of the three categories in accordance with the following criteria will help determine priorities for focusing staff and fiscal resources when processing grazing permits and leases, monitoring allotments, evaluating rangeland health, and implementing range improvements.

- Category I: Allotments where current livestock grazing management or level of use on public land is, or is expected to be, a significant causal factor in non-compliance with land health standards, or where a change in mandatory terms and conditions in the grazing authorization is or may be necessary. When identifying Category I allotments, review condition of critical habitat and conflicts with sage-grouse and consider whether projects have been proposed specifically for implementing the land health initiatives.
- Category M: Allotments where land health standards are met or where livestock grazing on public land is not a significant causal factor for non-compliance with the standards and current livestock management is in conformance with guidelines developed by State Directors in consultation with Resource Advisory Councils. Allotments where an evaluation of land health standards has not been completed, but existing monitoring data indicates that resource conditions are satisfactory.
- Category C: Allotments where public lands produce less than 50 percent of the forage in the allotment are less than 50 percent of the land area. An allotment should generally not be designated Category C if the public land in the allotment contains critical habitat for a threatened or endangered species. See Figure 1 for more information.

**FIGURE 1.  
ALLOTMENT FLOWCHART**

Resource management opportunities are considered based on the following factors:

- cost management;
- public or private land pattern;
- high ratio of acres per animal unit months (due to terrain);
- level of importance of the resource value and use; and
- opportunity, need, and value of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) funded projects.



## SCREENING CRITERIA

A screening criteria checklist would be reviewed prior to transfer or renewal. If an allotment passes the screening checklist, the permit would be renewed. If the allotment does not pass the screening checklist then the proposed transfer or renewal represents an exception and an environmental assessment should be prepared.

### **SCREENING CRITERIA CHECKLIST FOR 10-YEAR GRAZING PERMITS, LEASE RENEWALS, OR TRANSFERS**

This section contains information about current processes used in the Miles City Field Office and is subject to change based on Bureau policy changes. To determine if a proposed renewal or transfer is eligible, the following screening criteria should be applied. If the answer to every question is “Yes”, the proposed renewal or transfer qualifies and permits could be renewed or transferred. However, if the answer to any question is “No” the proposal represents an exception and an individual environmental assessment should be prepared.

- Does the allotment contain either a sagebrush focal area (SFA) or Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) for sage-grouse?
  - If “Yes” continue to Section B regardless of allotment category.
  - If “No” continue to next question.
- Is the allotment currently categorized as an “I” category allotment?
  - If “Yes”, do not use this Screening Criteria, analyze action in appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document.
  - If “No”, continue to next question.
- Is the allotment currently categorized as a “C” category allotment?
  - If “Yes”, go to Section A.
  - If “No”, continue to next question.
- Is the allotment currently categorized as an “M” category allotment?
  - If “Yes”, go to Section B.

#### **Section A: (“C” Allotments)**

- Does the allotment meet the Miles City Field Office **Standards for Rangeland Health**?
  - Uplands are in proper functioning condition?
  - Riparian areas and wetlands are in proper functioning condition?
  - Water quality meets Montana State standards?
  - Air quality meets Montana State standards?
  - Habitats are provided for healthy, productive, and diverse native plant and animal populations and communities. Habitats are improved or maintained for special status species (federally threatened, endangered, candidate, or Montana species of special concern, including greater sage-grouse)? (Does the environment contain all the necessary components to support viable populations of a sensitive/threatened and endangered species in a given area relative to site potential?)
- Will the proposed renewal or transfer maintain the class of livestock, season of use (14 days), or terms and conditions?

**Section B: (“M” Allotments)**

- Does field visit information exist that is current (i.e., less than 5 years old)? If yes, does the current information indicate that the allotment meets the Miles City Field Office Standards for Rangeland Health?
  - Riparian areas and wet meadows are present and in proper functioning condition?
  - Uplands are in proper functioning condition?
  - Water quality meets Montana State standards?
  - Air quality meets Montana State standards?
  - Habitats are provided for healthy, productive, and diverse native plant and animal populations and communities. Habitats are improved or maintained for special status species (federally threatened, endangered, candidate or Montana species of special concern)? (Does the environment contain all the necessary components to support viable populations of a sensitive/threatened and endangered species in a given area relative to site potential?)
  - Are habitat objectives and management considerations being met in priority sage-grouse habitat?
- If not, allotment conditions must be verified. If allotment conditions are verified, does allotment continue to meet Standards for Rangeland Health?
- Will the proposed renewal or transfer maintain the class of livestock, change in the season of use? (14 days), or change in the terms and conditions?

**RESERVE COMMON ALLOTMENT CRITERIA**

Establishment of RCAs would be evaluated when base property is acquired through land exchange, grazing preference is voluntarily relinquished, or preference is cancelled due to non-compliance with terms and conditions of authorized use.

Priority for using RCAs would be as follows:

- 1) permittees and lessees whose “normally permitted” allotments are under an approved restoration or recovery project, and
- 2) permittees and lessees whose “normally permitted” allotments are temporarily unavailable because of emergency conditions such as wildfire.

Competing applications (depending on the RCA allotment management plan and objectives, there may be more than one applicant selected to graze a particular RCA) would be evaluated based on the benefit to the resource and consider factors such as:

- 1) amount of public land benefited,
- 2) the prioritization of projects benefitting special status species, and
- 3) history of grazing permit compliance.

The authorized officer will make the selection based on the above listed factors.